

Evaluation of the Global Development Network, 2007

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I) Methodology and Overview

This purpose of this external evaluation of the Global Development Network (GDN) is to provide evidence on the strength of GDN's organizational processes while focusing on attempting to measure the effect or impact of its activities. Multiple methods including desk reviews, contextual visits of partner and GDN-run workshops, interviews, online surveys of over 1,500 end users or stakeholders, and external reviews of GDN activity outputs were used in collecting data across a wide range of stakeholders.¹ Multiple analytical methods using appropriate statistical tests also were used including cross-sectional analyses, change over time, cursory comparisons with best practice in other organizations, analysis of publishability, analysis of improvements from proposals to papers, and non-experimental attempts to create matching control groups, in addition to professional judgment. Due to space limitations, the evaluation assumes a working knowledge of GDN.

The evaluation distills in the executive summary in mostly qualitative terms the numerous primary findings, conclusions and key recommendations for stakeholders that result from the wide-ranging terms of reference. The executive summary has been lengthened to include key quantitative results and recommendations in response to GDN's request to do so. Additional recommendations may be found in the conclusions and recommendations section. The executive summary is organized roughly by its ordering in the main document to make it easier to know where to look for greater detail.

The evaluation's overall **findings are generally positive indicating some progress** from the previous process evaluation in certain areas **as well as qualified evidence of capacity built and knowledge creation from GDN-funded activities**.

Process Evaluation: In terms of the process evaluation, there are many **areas of progress** including

- broadening the reach (representation) across beneficiary types through GDN's centrally-run activities and across some regionally-run activities;
- decreasing somewhat conference expenditures;
- creating board audit, executive, and program committees;
- forming a Donor Advisory Council;
- showing that its activities are scalable during fiscal crises; and
- planning to deepen or broaden capacity building effects through individualized training activities to match target constituencies' priorities.

Despite a financial downturn during fiscal years 2004-2006, GDN was able to fund its primary activities to a level deemed at least satisfactory to most key stakeholders. **GDN was able to diversify and increase funding sources** in fiscal years 2007 and probably 2008 en route to meet goals of reducing dependence on its largest donor, the World Bank, despite considerable challenges in broadening its donor base into new areas such as corporate donors. Despite sometimes sharp disagreements among stakeholders over highest value added from the different activities in GDN's portfolio, GDN generally is perceived as providing **mostly unique, relevant, and valuable services**.

Impact Evaluation: In terms of the impact evaluation, grantees suggest **moderate individual-level effects** from GDN-funded capacity building and knowledge creation activities. Given insufficient funding and a relatively brief period to generate broad-ranging long-term impacts, the evidence suggests **broad impacts only in some regions** where GDN's efforts accompany those of other actors with similar goals. The

¹ Table 1.1 in section 1 provides a summary of the types of questions asked by stakeholder types in the online surveys. Response rates for end users, although typical for online surveys without extensive follow up, are sufficiently low (between 16 and 37 percent) that respondents likely are biased towards those more satisfied with GDN's activities.

evaluation does not find evidence of policy impacts nor does it find a reason to believe this is an appropriate objective, but it does find **evidence of building a cadre of professionals capable of policy relevant work** and helping build policy relevant research as well as suggestions of some outreach to policy makers. GDNet and the annual conference are seen as potential vehicles for providing additional public goods for its targeted beneficiaries. The evaluation found **potential differences across regions in uniformity in quality of capacity building** from GDN-funded regional research competition (RRC) activities. **Grantee satisfaction with GDN's overall portfolio of activities on average is between high and medium** (the second or third highest rating on a five point Likert scale) but closer to high, especially among respondents from Sub-Saharan Africa.

The evaluation also notes many **areas for further improvement**. This list includes

- clarifying disciplinary focus,
- increasing the strength of board governance and management capacity,
- increasing capacity in policy relevance and links with policy makers,
- clarifying the extent to which RNPs are considered and treated as partners versus grantees,
- increasing quality of processes across RRCs and learning across RNPs,
- increased openness to inputs from donors and network partners,
- better monitoring grant fund distribution by categories of researchers and overhead costs, and
- reviewing and strengthening key human resource and management policies.

Areas for improvement on financial issues include

- continuing to reduce income volatility,
- maintaining or increasing staff expertise in research and fundraising as feasible,
- creating new relationships at the World Bank to champion long-term financial support needed to maintain its long-term capacity building mission, and
- working towards further and more refined joint fundraising with RNPs.

II) Reach, Outcomes, Effectiveness, Relevance, Impact, and Cost Effectiveness

A) Objectives and Reach

The evaluation's analysis begins (section 2.1) with a key area of concern raised in the previous evaluation and an important starting point to assess an organization – its objectives. Compared to the prior evaluation, this evaluation finds evidence there probably is **somewhat greater agreement and lower tensions regarding GDN's objectives** and target beneficiaries and how they are manifested. GDN's many and varied objectives and target beneficiaries still generates some clear disagreements due to the large number of objectives it claims and the innate conflicts among some of them such as the balance between targeting individuals and institutions and the implicit tension between emphases on capacity building and supporting only highest quality inputs and outputs. The **role of multidisciplinary remains an area of disagreement**, although no longer quite the source of tension previously. These disagreements complicate evaluating based on a set of clear, limited objectives as well as creating consensus among stakeholders on GDN's success in strategies, plans, and activities' measured against agreed upon goals. The evidence suggests a portfolio approach to meet many different objectives is appropriate. Such approach allows greater leeway in programming by GDN's management, which, while positive generally, also reduces board control somewhat, but it also increases the ability to create new or innovative programming as well as to diversify itself as an organization reducing dependence on the World Bank. The primary recommendation relevant to GDN's objectives, which should be considered during the current strategic review process, is:

- Clarify further the extent to which GDN generally plans to focus on building capacity broadly across the social sciences or building capacity primarily in economics with other disciplines serving mostly as an instrument to answer questions of interest.

GDN's board and staffing suggests dominance by economists. However, the evaluation finds that **for its more centrally run activities, GDN is making concerted efforts to have broad representation.** Women, younger researchers, and increasingly people from a variety of disciplines in addition to economics are somewhat better represented than in the past, and regional representation is broad. GDN's **record in broadening beyond targeting only economists is mixed with delegated activities** – the regional research competitions (RRCs) – with some regions broadening considerably and others not at all.² Similar variation appears **true to a lesser degree in terms of gender representation** by RRC region, although the evaluation has no clear benchmark by region. The evaluation did not have information on reach by higher needs countries or areas within regions. The key priority recommendation in this area is:

- Continue GDN's recent unofficial policy of encouraging the selection of themes in calls for papers that are more naturally interdisciplinary in subject, supported by outreach outside of economics networks.

An additional recommendation includes:

- Begin to develop measures to track higher needs countries or even areas within countries.

B) Outcomes, Effectiveness, Relevance and Cost Effectiveness, by Activity

The evaluation reveals varying evidence regarding the relevance and effects of GDN's primary activities. There is some evidence of individual level effects but evidence of broader impact only for regions in which GDN's activities are considered best run and in which they operate in concert with other complementary organizations. The evaluation considers cost efficiency of GDN's activities but does not emphasize the results, as it lacks benchmarks for comparisons, and activities involve different outputs and outcomes, some not readily quantified nor easily comparable. The portfolio approach of activities allows GDN to legitimately claim relevance of all its activities toward some objective and target group, even if preventing unanimity of agreement about each one's relative value toward the larger mission.

RRCs and Global Research Projects (GRPs): As shown in interviews and survey results, **stakeholder support is strongest and most universal for RRCs.** RRCs suffer, however, from somewhat greater difficulty in attracting new funds and lack of visible regional impact in some regions due to ineffective implementation and lack of other complementary efforts of other organizations. The evaluation's review of survey data suggest increases in capacity built for funded individuals, with RRC grantee respondents indicating an **average value of effectiveness of the RRC process between medium and high** (the second or third highest rating on a five point Likert scale). The evaluation found **differences in levels of support and mentoring for RRCs across regions** as well as perceived value added through the process, with particular concerns in the Asian regions. In terms of effect of the RRC process on individuals' research, the average indicated the average change across the five point Likert scale (rated from zero ["none or very little"] to four ["very substantially"]) was 2.1 to 2.3, or closer to "moderately" than "substantially" changed.³ End user survey responses regarding value added were correlated with the amount of feedback and value/quality of review sessions suggesting a need to more consistently encourage feedback and mentoring of RRCs.

The evaluation finds **mixed evidence regarding GRPs with stronger individual-level impacts suggested by grantees than perceived value of outputs by stakeholders.** GRPs are considered a **highly unique activity but also criticized by some stakeholders for insufficient relevance to objectives** due to disagreements regarding the GRP theme selection process and selected GRP themes relative to differently perceived objectives across stakeholders. Some also believe GRPs provide highly variable quality across

² The three year averages for FY 2004-2006 in terms of proportion of RRC grantees outside of economics ranges by region from 0 to 53 percent, with an overall average of 38 percent.

³ (See section 2.3.1.4 for further details.)

themes, especially given the higher expectations and resources provided per unit output, as noted in the cost efficiency section. Although the evaluation cannot assess that claim objectively through its data collection activities, it does find **grantee survey responses suggest increases in capacity built equivalent to that found for RRC processes**. In contrast, **little statistical evidence was found of capacity built as measured in improvements from proposals to research paper** from pilot test research for one GRP and one RRC, although limitations of proposals provided may help explain the non-findings. The evaluation also did not find positive effects from RRC and GRP capacity building through a non-experimental technique that matches respondents from the grantee and broad constituency surveys based on similar observable characteristics, although the evaluation notes that this technique cannot always surmount biases it seeks to overcome, especially given the low survey response rates.⁴ Given the most successful fundraising approach for GRPs focusing on different issues and techniques by GRP, they are unlikely to be a vehicle for long-term measurable impact unless GDN changes its approach.

In terms of outputs, or knowledge created, from GDN-funded activities, self-reported survey data indicate a **median of two publication types per grant for RRCs and GRPs**. Taken individually, on average one of every two grantees published in an international journal, two of three in a national journal, two of three as a book chapter, and just over one working paper per person. These figures represent upper bounds on GDN's effect on knowledge creation, as GDN cannot take credit in every case either for increasing the publishability of the papers nor for helping these grantees conduct research that otherwise definitely would not have been conducted.⁵ **RRCs generally are found to be considerably more cost efficient mechanisms in the strictest sense of the term** (\$19,200 per team or \$12,200 per team member on average) than the GRPs (averaging between \$54,000 and \$135,000 per grant), although theoretically GRPs can lead to greater knowledge added in a concentrated subject area or lead to other follow-on activities besides just publications. Further, most funding for GRPs are earmarked and not fungible for application to RRC projects. The evaluation did not find a satisfactorily objective, comparative way of judging *cost effectiveness* given limited resources and time. The next evaluation ultimately will have to judge the cost efficiency of the otherwise cost inefficient Bridging Research and Policy (BRP) and Health GRPs based on the activities and direct and indirect outputs from them. Key priorities GDN should consider regarding RRCs and GRPs include:

- Giving greater consideration from the outset of future GRPs toward strategies for disseminating research findings to the broader policy and development community.
- Develop better delivery vehicles, such as requiring policy briefs (accompanied by training to do so), for clarifying the policy relevance of papers from RRCs, if not GRPs.
- Continue to follow through with the findings of its "Workshop on Methodology for Comparative Analysis" to be more proactive in promoting a diversity of methodologies in the choice of intended research design through its GRPs and other activities.

Additional, lower priority, recommendations that may be more resource intensive or require other changes include:

- Consider holding some GRP workshops before or after a disciplinary conference chosen appropriately for the theme to emphasize capacity building of attendees.

⁴ The matching processes, known generally as propensity score matching, are multivariate techniques to create "treatment" and "control" groups from non-experimental data by matching pairs or groups of respondents based on observable information. Results all were either negative or statistically insignificant across seven outcome measures and using six different matching methods. GDN should have independent researchers, who are less time and resource constrained review this data and undertake further tests using this approach.

⁵ Furthermore, there is an upward bias in this type of self-reported data probably augmented by response rates well below 70 percent where such biases are not noticed.

- Consider individual-level training programs or GDN self-training modules beyond the top priority of methodology and technical issues such as use of Internet resources as modules that could accompany RRC workshops to broaden and deepen their effects.

Annual Conference: The annual conference remains GDN's **most contentious activity in terms of relevance, uniqueness, quality, and cost, but it received generally strong ratings on average from stakeholders for its overall value** for its broad set of constituents. Concerns appear somewhat more muted or less widespread than in the previous evaluation, as GDN has reduced somewhat earlier extravagances although business meetings and GRP workshops, which perhaps should be considered separately, keep total costs relatively high. Its networking function is seen as at least a moderately useful global event for bringing researchers together from different parts of the world. The grantee survey reflects at least a **moderate breadth, if not depth, of South-South networking within and across regions**, although stakeholders indicated a need to try to foster greater inter-regional interactions. The evaluation did not have time for an independent review regarding concerns of some stakeholders regarding both average quality and variance in quality of papers and presentations and was unable to attend an annual conference as part of writing this report. **Different measures of cost efficiency for the conference could lead to sharply differing conclusions** For instance, the per paper cost (about \$10,500) is very high given the lack of capacity building outside of separate workshops. Other measures could lead to the conclusion that the net conference cost is relatively reasonable given that most researchers are understandably subsidized with average costs under \$1,300 across all attending researchers, if one excludes the estimated \$4,000 cost per participant in the conference side business meetings and the costs for workshops ascribed by the evaluation to GRPs. High priority recommendations include:

- Consider consistent specific track themes across years, increasing networking among clearer sets of audiences.
- Explore publishing and distributing proceedings and papers in a post-conference (if possible, pre-conference) compact disc and on-line to extend the long-term value of the conference.

More time and resource consuming recommendations that should be considered carefully in coming years include:

- Consider experimenting with alternative scheduling such as an 18 month schedule that would consume fewer resources, allow secretariat and board to focus on additional priorities and activities, potentially increase uniformity of paper quality, and allow scheduling across regions to vary by appropriate season.
- GDN also could experiment one year pairing itself with a relevant academic conference and using surveys across years to compare the added value versus the ABCDE conference.
- If GDN desires to pursue both capacity building and highest-quality knowledge building objectives for the conference, GDN should experiment with purposely focusing on increasing capacity building in at least selected sessions in a more meaningful and effective way while ensuring more consistent quality in other sessions.

GDNNet: Among those who understand GDN best as well as targeted users, there is some level of **agreement regarding GDNNet's usefulness as well as the need to expand its awareness among and relevance for developing country researchers**. GDN has been actively pursuing strategies to increase the relevance of its GDNNet offerings, broadening access to journals, although some impediments to doing so are out of its control. GDN should explore through its strategic review and separate evaluation of GDNNet additional potential uses for GDNNet, since it likely will be difficult to differentiate itself as adding value through aggregating development information from the southern perspective. Rapidly emerging uses of the Internet as a networking tool might provide GDNNet additional visibility. Key priority recommendations for GDNNet include:

- Consider ways to more make GDNNet a portal for Southern researchers to leading working paper and database collections worldwide.

- Change grantee contracts so that GDNet serves as a central location for datasets funded by GDN process so that it can confirm its policy of open access data is followed and to reduce search costs for researchers.
- Continue to pursue ways to extend the reach of journal availability through GDNet or otherwise, considering the use of key stakeholders and board members to serve as liaisons.

A lower priority recommendation is:

- Assess the extent to which more senior researchers might be aided by serving as a focal point for changing access policies of national datasets by setting up an international model program of data access from national institutions in the Global South, which currently often severely limit access.

Additional recommendations for the upcoming evaluation of GDNet are provided in the recommendations and conclusions section.

Awards and Medals Competition (AMC) and Most Innovative Development Project (MIDP): These awards are funded through an individual and decreasing earmarked grant that is not fungible across activities. The analysis suggests that **AMC's are rated more highly by AMC grantees than RRC and GRP grantees** for increased career advancement, contact with policy makers, and increased professional visibility. However, they **do not appear a cost effective alternative to GDN's other activities.**⁶ These are an area where GDN's appeal to a broader clientele than just economists appears more successful.

Support of Institutions: In terms of GDN's activities in institution building, **GDN's support for institutions thus far has been narrow and *ad hoc***, although a pilot BRP-related training activity is planned. Further work with institutions could be highly relevant and increase the cost effectiveness of its BRP but would depend on additional resources and development of an inexpensive, efficient mechanism for delivery and possibly hiring a person with such experience on staff. There is no objective way for the evaluation to determine the extent to which shifting resources from supporting individuals to supporting institutions would increase or decrease effects or impacts, but GDN should consider carefully measures of cost effectiveness as presented in this report. GDN's efforts to support institutions obviously could be much stronger, were additional funding available and agreement reached on the board that more work in this area fits sufficiently within GDN's broad mandate to demand its limited resources. The evaluation recommends consideration of facilitating research partnerships between Northern and Southern researchers and institutes through its current ongoing activities to better fulfill the organization's objective to generate high quality research.

C) Overall Satisfaction, Highest Marginal Benefit, and Policy Relevance and Impact

Grantee average satisfaction with GDN's overall portfolio of activities is closer to high (second highest rating on a five point Likert scale) than medium with survey respondents from Sub-Saharan Africa in particular indicating higher satisfaction. These findings indicate value added from GDN's funded activities as a whole but with room remaining for improvement and greater success.

In terms of where grantees would prefer GDN spend additional resources, **grantees are most interested in training both researchers and institutes on how to influence policy and policy debates and in funding workshop trainings on technical issues.** The next highest responses were funding additional research grants within their region and increasing access to journal articles or working paper series for those without access. Commendably, **GDN has begun to plan a training of individual researchers that appears to parallel some of the top priorities** of end users and should complement and deepen effects, if not impacts, of its current portfolio.

⁶ About \$17,800 per medal, \$61,800 per award and \$70,000 per MIDP.

There is modest evidence that GDN's efforts thus far have resulted in **increased capacity for policy relevant research as well as more modest evidence of outreach to policy makers**, but not always supported by the GDN-funded processes. GDN activities, training, and mentoring generally generate **more academically than policy focused outputs** reflecting the potential conflict perceived by traditionally trained economists between the objective of high policy relevance and impact and the objective to foster highest quality research. The evaluation finds **anecdotal evidence of capacity built informing policy making in certain cases and regions**. There is no compelling evidence that GDN-produced research and efforts themselves have produced a "policy impact," which the evaluation considers an inappropriate indicator for GDN given most of its objectives. Planned training resulting from the BRP research and the Health project and GDN as a distribution method could further GDN's ability to make further claims in that direction, however.

III) Overall Process and Performance

A) Financial Sustainability and Risk Diversification

GDN has struggled, with some success, toward increasing its financial sustainability and diversification over the time period analyzed. GDN has been **able to fund its primary activities to a level deemed satisfactory to key stakeholders** even if it is not near meeting the high absorptive capacity of its many potential beneficiaries for its conceivable activities. GDN **failed to meet its over-ambitious financial goals of its 2005-07 strategic plan** and actually suffered through three years of financial decreases through FY 2006 due primarily to reductions from two key donors – the World Bank (declining by half) and a bilateral donor Italy (declining to zero). **GDN has made significant, if qualified, progress in diversifying its donor base for FY 2007 and 2008**, however (see Table 3.1-1). Using several different methods to calculate financial volatility, the evaluation found that the **income volatility has decreased slightly** from the FY 02-04 to FY 05-07 time periods if one includes the decrease in funding from the World Bank, although income volatility across donors besides the Bank has remained the same or increased slightly from the previous time period depending on the measure (see Annex Y). On net, this is positive as long as GDN can find substitutes for its current major non-Bank donor (the Gates Foundation) in the future. Current funding commitments and other prospective funding make **GDN's viability appear strong and potentially promising to at least maintain scale in the near term**. Given limited time and resources, the evaluation did not find evidence in its admittedly limited interactions with donors of continuing reluctance among donors to contribute to GDN due to a "World Bank whiff" noted in the prior evaluation.

As with most grant-dependent organizations, GDN's long-term financial sustainability is uncertain and will remain so unless and until the donor base of sizeable donors is widened and funding becomes less volatile. GDN's mission is one unlikely to connect with a highly diverse and rapidly growing donor base, especially in the corporate sector, which GDN mostly unsuccessfully attempted to pursue. GDN will have to remain flexible in scaling activities up or down annually response to unavoidable fluctuations in overall funding. This is unfortunate for GDN given that its mission reflects a focus on capacity building changes that require a long-term commitment for success. To a large extent, however, GDN appears able to undertake necessary changes. In this respect, GDN may be ahead of some other similar organizations.

B) Governance, Organization and Interaction with Regional Partners and Stakeholders

The evaluation lists in section 4.2.1 the several **ways GDN has responded directly or indirectly to predominantly governance and process issues and recommendations from the previous evaluation** including

- creating audit, program, and executive committees;
- making concerted, albeit unsuccessful, efforts to raise money from corporate sources;
- reducing somewhat their conference expenditures;
- forming a Donor Advisory Council;
- raising funding levels at least in the past year; and

- showing that its activities are scalable during fiscal crises.

These activities indicate responsiveness donors seek although further work remains, and some innate difficulties and contradictions may not be easily overcome.

The analysis of organizational structure indicates there is some disconnect between GDN management's description of GDN being "an efficient administrative mechanism to conduct research" and a quasi-think tank model assumed by some stakeholders, who suggest greater research capacity in the secretariat. The evaluation does not advocate the latter view but does suggest it as an option worth exploring as a way to increase the extent to which highest quality work is facilitated as an objective. It also notes the value of adding staffing with fundraising expertise, although the cost-benefit ratio for an expensive position such as that is unclear for a research organization and should be considered as a provisional appointment for 18 to 24 months based on success.

The evaluation's analysis of board member responses suggests significantly **lower division in the board than during the previous evaluation** since many members were not around for the challenging key decisions of the past. Key problems appear to be **continuing weak governance from the board, insufficient transparency in the process of choosing board members, and insufficient structures to guarantee institutional memory or improved board management capacity**. With many organizations, board governance is not prioritized until after an organization has to overcome problems a board failed to prevent through proper oversight. Although GDN has been fortunate enough not to have yet encountered such a problem, best practice is to move forward to strengthen governance beforehand. Despite board member interest in working more on strategic issues, the board is unlikely to be able to do so meeting only twice a year. Key priority recommendations in line with best practices are:

- Develop requirements probably by positions for future incoming members to guarantee at least some positions have greater experience in managing organizations or boards and financial background.
- Increase board interactions by extending the number of days of board meetings and/or adding one or two virtual meetings per year via the Internet.
- Increase the number of permanent committees to handle the board's business issues considering such committee types as programmatic and development committees. Committees are where most boards get the real work and oversight accomplished.
- Clarify for prospective incoming members appropriate time expectations for board membership such as through a frequently asked questions document and a nonbinding agreement about board member responsibilities.
- Providing new board members a strong orientation to the organization within their first month on the board.
- Work with nominating organizations to make recruitment of board members more transparent.
- Make sure the board has a conflict of interest policy signed at least once if not annually.

Additional recommendations include:

- Consider an additional donor representative to help groundtruth GDN's ideas from the perspective of funding.

In terms of GDN's interactions with its RNPs, the evaluation does not find a clear, compelling rationale to change models. Insufficient clarity exists however regarding the extent to which it is a network of networks – that is, more of a partnership or more of a grantor/grantee relationship. The evaluation supports GDN's new efforts toward creating dedicated work plans with joint fundraising with RNPs, which could prove financially rewarding and decrease perceptions of potential competition for fund raising and increase funds that can be leveraged regionally. There are some concerns about insufficient monitoring of grant fund distribution by categories of researchers and overhead costs. GDN also should be careful not to reduce overhead costs paid to RNPs too much despite shrinking budgets. The evaluation recommends a few priority recommendations regarding GDN's relationship with its RNPs:

- Clarify the extent to which GDN is a network of networks versus a centralized organization with networks as grantees, increasing contacts if more of a partnership approach is decided upon.
- Widen the new pilot idea of working with RNPs in designing a coordinated fundraising plan toward a dedicated work plan with joint fundraising after clarifying roles more fully.
- Provide greater institutional support for RNPs that rotate administrative centers to increase continuity during transitions. Look for partnerships and other ways to generate greater impact in the Asia region in building research capacity.
- Improve learning across regional networks through an additional, dedicated real or virtual meeting outside of the annual conference.

Additional recommendations include:

- Augment input in decision making process from RNPs on GRP themes or candidate selection.
- Consider more detailed reporting to monitor the grant fund distribution to categories of researchers and overhead costs. Consider adopting the common reporting framework used by many other donors.

In terms of the ways in which GDN interacts with its target constituencies and establishes policies for inclusion of stakeholders in programmatic activities, there is some call among stakeholders for seeking greater participation of targeted beneficiaries in planning activities and more actively participating in other existing networks and building further strategic alliances in its field. As with the prior evaluation, this evaluation does not see a workable alternative model for administering GRPs given their size and subject matters, and it does not have the impression that GDN overly centralizes intellectual leadership within GDN currently. The evaluation team also notes improved branding and self-marketing as an area for additional review and improvement.

C) Management Processes

The evaluation considered transparency and disclosure as well as democracy as two key dimensions of organization policy. The evaluation finds among RNP heads and board members **a desire for a more participatory approach in selection of GRP and annual conference themes**. GDN recently has shown **increased openness to donor inputs**, although it is unclear that donors consider the input meaningful and attended to. In terms of GDN's financial policies, GDN conducts annual audits and conducted a recent review by the World Bank's Development Grant Fund unit of its financial policies. Although the evaluation did not receive a copy of the report from GDN, the team's understanding of the review as interpreted by GDN itself suggests **GDN has reasonable to strong systems given its age and size** and that GDN appears to be incorporating the review's suggestions into its financial policies. Stakeholder survey results and interviews suggest that stakeholders feel GDN has **some feedback learning processes built into the system but that they could be expanded**.

Key priority recommendations in this area include:

- Being attentive to remaining as non-hierarchical as possible given its small size and need to have partners feel ownership and involvement to remain engaged as partners.
- GDN should hire a consultant to work with the organization to develop a coherent branding strategy and advise it regarding a communications plan.

Additional recommendations include:

- Consider hiring a staff member with deep research experience if GDN wishes to focus more on providing intellectual direction to new activities and oversight for conference activities.
- Alternatively, or perhaps additionally, consider hiring a fundraiser as a fulltime staff member or consultant based in the US or Europe.

- Look for ways to create additional strategic partnerships and linkages with additional consortia and participation in other conferences.
- Engage more individuals to participate more fully in planning processes.

Regarding management and administrative systems, while GDN has undertaken advisable external reviews of its financial and accounting systems, the evaluation's understanding is that GDN has **yet to undertake external reviews of its human resources practices and policies**. The report notes several issues likely to be raised in such a review and also points out **changing legal implications now that GDN has acquired international organization status**. The previous president's use of working groups for recurring activities or long-term issues is seen as a helpful organizing tool. There is a common theme that staff appear overburdened during the months leading up to the conference. Key priorities for attention in alignment with organizational best practice include:

- Undertaking a more complete external review of human resource policies.
- Conduct a legal review of its situation and options given its newly acquired international organization status in reference to liabilities, taxes, etc.
- Formalize how staff would handle problems with supervisors or top management including naming an ombudsperson to handle serious or personal concerns with management or supervisors.

Additional, lower priority recommendations include:

- Establish clear and implemented policies on selection and supervision of family or friends
- Establish a policy on and training regarding sexual harassment.
- Review application of travel rules for consistency and cost effectiveness in line with other similar NGOs or smaller international organizations and not the World Bank.
- Improve and more regularly update GDN's internal database and better maintain it for consistency of information across staff.
- Undertake a market survey of similar organizations in India and internationally to check on rough comparability of local and international salary rates.
- Examine whether it is feasible to add at least temporary additional local staff if the conference remains annual.

Finally, this evaluation provides several recommendations for the next evaluation and some minor technical recommendations in Annex AB. A list of interviewees is provided in Annex A.